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C O N F I D E N T I A L USEU BRUSSELS 000567

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PLEASE PASS TO SPECIAL ENVOY GEORGE MITCHELL'S PARTY FROM  
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CHRISTOPHER MURRAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2019  
TAGS: [OVIP](#) [MITCHELL](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [EUN](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SPECIAL ENVOY MITCHELL'S VISIT TO  
THE EU IN BRUSSELS

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, CHRISTOPHER W. MURRAY, FOR REASONS 1.  
4(B) AND (D).

Senator Mitchell,

11. (C) We warmly welcome your visit to Brussels. The members of the European Union's Political and Security Committee (PSC) look forward to meeting with you April 22 and exchanging ideas on Israeli-Palestinian and broader regional peace. The President heard from EU heads of state/government in regard to Middle East peace at the U.S.-EU Summit in Prague on April 5. In Prague, Spanish PM Zapatero, on behalf of the EU-27, said that settlement expansion cast into doubt the validity of a two-state solution. He also raised as a problem the absence of a recognized Palestinian negotiating partner.

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Why the PSC Matters  
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12. (C) You have already met several times with High Representative Javier Solana, whose personal commitment to the search for peace in the Middle East is well-known throughout Europe. While his role is high profile, EU foreign and security policy is developed through a continuous process of consensus building in the PSC. The PSC is made up of ambassadors from all 27 member states who meet at least twice a week to debate and prepare decisions on the full range of external relations issues of concern to the EU. Their discussions lead the way for agreed positions of their foreign ministers, who convene monthly at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meetings. The PSC is led by the representative of the rotational EU presidency--at this time the Czechs. They and we have asked that you meet with the PSC so that the members of this critical policy-building level of the EU can hear your insights into prospects for peace in the Middle East based on your recent trips. The previous two U.S. officials who have addressed this group are General David Petraeus on February 12, and Special Representative Richard Holbrooke on March 23. We do not expect any additional such U.S. exchanges with the PSC before the summer. Your thoughts will be transmitted by each PSC Ambassador to his or her capital.

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## Anxiety about Israel

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13. (C) There is considerable and sometimes sharp debate within the EU over how to move forward in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even before the Israeli incursion into Gaza at the end of 2008, the EU had become sharply critical of the humanitarian and political impact of Israel's closure of Gaza. After the military action, many were openly cynical about the call for reconstruction funds, with some in the EU saying they did not want to repeatedly rebuild what Israel destroyed during military incursions. Since the end of the military action, the EU has expressed frustration at Israel's restrictions on what can be imported and on the limited number of trucks allowed into Gaza, in addition to restrictions on the movement of persons. The EU is critical as well of Israel's continued West Bank settlement activity and its destruction of houses in East Jerusalem. The new government in Israel gives many in the EU pause, with some suggesting a slow-down in the upgrading of EU-Israeli relations until the new government makes explicit its commitment to a two-state solution.

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## Dealing with Hamas and Syria

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14. (C) The EU continues to share officially our support for Quartet principles, but among many countries there is growing skepticism of the shared U.S.-EU stipulation that Hamas accept Quartet principles if we are to deal with it. We have heard that in recent foreign ministers' meetings several

ministers argued that it is time to deal with Hamas as a fact on the ground, or that we should be flexible in dealing with a possible Hamas presence in a Palestinian transition government. You may hear questions about how the U.S. or EU should deal with the prospect of Hamas being part of, or leading, a future Palestinian government after the next round of elections. On broader issues, there is general support in the EU for moving forward sometime this summer on an Association Agreement with Syria, an instrument nearly every other Mediterranean state except Libya already has. Some EU states want to go slow because of concerns over human rights, nuclear proliferation, interference in Lebanon, or terrorism support. However, we have heard that most think that engagement is the way to press Syria to improve its behavior, with Solana and some others arguing it is also the way to pull Syria out of Iran's orbit.

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## The EU's Role

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15. (C) The PSC ambassadors will want your insights from your just completed trip and will want to hear in greater detail the Administration's thinking on ways forward given the issues before us. They would like to know, specifically, if the Administration will continue to work on the basis of the Annapolis Conference or will focus on the Roadmap. You will be asked how the U.S. will work with the new Israeli government if it does not explicitly commit itself to a two-state solution. Your interlocutors may well argue that only the U.S. can influence Israel and urge that the U.S. press Israel hard on settlements, home demolitions, and opening of Gaza. You will want to describe what the U.S. intends to do, and also urge the PSC members to use the EU's influence as well. They will also be interested in your thoughts on Iran's role in the region.

16. (U) The EU is one of the largest contributors to a wide range of Palestinian assistance programs. Assistance provided by the European Commission totals \$581.2 million for 2008, including contributions to support the Palestinian Authority; contributions to UNRWA for refugees; humanitarian and food aid; a stability instrument to promote the rule of law; and several other programs. In addition to the amount given by the Commission, many individual EU member states

also have a wide range of bilateral assistance programs that amount to several hundred million dollars a year. Like us, the EU does not work with Hamas, but it provides considerable assistance to Gaza, including paying salaries of teachers and doctors.

17. (C) The Middle East conflict has been discussed by the Secretary of State in her meetings with the EU Troika (Czechs, Swedes, Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, High Representative Solana) on March 6 in Brussels and with all 27 EU Foreign Ministers in Prague on April 5. The President also discussed the Middle East with EU heads of government in Prague on April 5, in a session separate from that of the Foreign Ministers.

18. (C) The EU plays an important economic and trade role in the Middle East and we pay attention to the structures like the PSC where member states work to build and keep consensus. There are times when the EU steps forward to play a somewhat complicating role, and there are also times when it can appear to depend too much on us for action, such as in saying only we can influence Israel on settlements and on Gaza. The EU has welcomed your appointment and the greater activism of the U.S. in the Middle East under the new Administration. Your visit provides an excellent opportunity to ensure we continue to work together on these difficult issues.

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